

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 4868

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SUBJECT: THE KUOMINTANG: A PARTY IN TRANSITION

REF: TAIPEI A-147

1. SUMMARY: THIS TELEGRAM IS A SUMMARY OF TAIPEI A-147
"THE KUOMINTANG: A PARTY IN TRANSITION" WHICH ANALYZES
THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE KMT FROM A POWERFUL BUT
RATHER CRUDE INSTRUMENT OF MAINLANDER OCCUPATION AND CON-
CONTROL ON TAIWAN TO A MORE FLEXIBLE, MORE SOPHISTICATED AND
INCREASINGLY TAIWANESE POLITICAL MACHINE CONTROLLED BY
PREMIER CHIANG CHING-KUO. END SUMMARY.

2. THE KUOMINTANG WHICH RETREATED TO TAIWAN FROM THE
MAINLAND IN 1949 WAS A COLLECTION OF COMPETING FACTIONS
UNDER THE COALITION LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT CHIANG KAI-
SHEK. HE WAS ABLE TO CONSOLIDATE HIS LEADERSHIP OF THE
PARTY AND GOVERNMENT ON TAIWAN IN LARGE PART BECAUSE HIS
OPPONENTS WITHIN THE SYSTEM NO LONGER HAD INDEPENDENT
POWER BASES TO OPPOSE HIS ACTION. THE PARTY HE BUILT
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DURING THIS INITIAL PERIOD OF THE 1950'S WAS A DOMINANT

ELEMENT OF THE ESTABLISHMENT. IT WAS A RATHER CRUDE, MAINLANDER INSTRUMENT OF CONTROL WHOSE POWER REACHED INTO ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY, BUT WHICH ULTIMATELY RELIED ON FORCEFUL SANCTIONS EXERCISED THROUGH THE POLICE FORCE AND GARRISON COMMAND.

3. THE CENTRAL STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE PARTY DECIDED IMPORTANT ISSUES UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PRESIDENT CHIANG. THE PARTY ORGANIZATION SERVED AS MEDIATOR AND CONTROLLER IN THE GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM. AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL THE PARTY AND THE GOVERNMENT WERE ALMOST INSEPARABLE BECAUSE OF THE WIDESPREAD PRESENCE OF PARTY MEMBERS THROUGHOUT THE BUREAUCRACY. AT THE LOCAL LEVEL THE PARTY CHAIRMAN WAS THE MAINLANDER "BAULEITER", CONTROLLING DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY LOCALLY ELECTED OFFICIALS.

4. BUT THE PARTY HAD SERIOUS PROBLEMS: LOCAL GOVERNMENT WAS INEFFICIENT AND OFTEN CORRUPT; THE TAIWANESE, THE EDUCATED YOUNG AND MUCH OF TAIWAN'S URBAN POPULATION WERE ALIENATED.

5. INITIALLY WORKING WITHIN THE MAINLANDER POWER STRUCTURE -- SECURITY APPARATUS, MILITARY, RETIRED SERVICEMEN -- PREMIER CHIANG CHING-KUO HAD BEGUN HIS CLIMB TO THE TOP SOON AFTER ARRIVING IN TAIWAN. IN THE CHANGING POLITICAL CLIMATE OF THE 1960S, ESPECIALLY GROWING PROSPERITY AND THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF TAIWANESE IN THE ECONOMY, THE MILITARY AND ELSEWHERE, CCK BEGAN HIS GRADUAL MOVE INTO THE CIVILIAN AND THUS INEVITABLY TAIWANESE SECTORS OF SOCIETY.

6. THE PARTY ORGANIZATION WAS AN EXCEQLLENT TARGET FOR CCK'S NEXT STAGE. BY BUILDING HIS OWN ORGANIZATION FROM THE BOTTOM - AS HE HAD IN THE YOUTH CORPS - HE WAS ABLE TO GRADUALLY ERODE THE RESIDUAL POWER AND INFLUENCE OF THE MAINLANDER OLD GUARD AND TO BUILD HIS OWN MACHINE, HEAVILY LACED WITH TAIWANESE. CCK'S EFFORTS PROBABLY COINCIDED WITH A GRUDGING RECOGNITION BY HIS FATHER THAT THE PARTY MUST MOVE TO BRING IN GREATER TAIWANESE REPRESENTATION. IN ANY CASE, HE HAD AN INCREASINGLY FREE HAND AS

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HIS FATHER RETIRED FROM ACTIVE LEADERSHIP.

7. LI HUAN WAS AND IS CCK'S MAN IN THE PARTY. APPOINTED PROVINCIAL PARTY CHAIRMAN IN 1968, HE SET OUT TO BUILD THE NEW MACHINE FROM THE GROUND UP. NEW PEOPLE -- A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF WHOM ARE TAIWANESE -- WERE BROUGHT INTO THE PARTY TO IMPROVE ITS EFFICIENCY AND RESPONSIVENESS.

8. WHEN HE WAS APPOINTED PREMIER IN 1972, CCK BROUGHT LI HUAN TO THE PARTY'S CENTRAL HEADQUARTERS TO CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS. WITH A PERSONAL MACHINE BEING BUILT AT LOCAL LEVELS, CCK SOUGHT TO ERODE THE INFLUENCE OF THE PARTY AT THE CENTER IN ORDER TO ELIMINATE THE KMT "OLD GUARD" AS A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF OPPOSITION TO HIS INCREASINGLY PERSONAL RULE. HAVING ALSO PENETRATED THE TAIWANESE OPPOSITION, CCK IS ABLE TO OPERATE WITH MORE FINESSE. THE PARTY IS GRADUALLY BECOMING AN ELECTION-MOBILIZATION ORGANIZATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL AND ALREADY IS PRIMARILY A RUBBER-STAMP ADVISORY BODY AT THE CENTER. THE END RESULT IS AN ORGANIZATION WHICH INCREASINGLY RESEMBLES DICK DALEY'S COOK COUNTY MACHINE.

9. GIVEN HIS ROLE AS CCK'S LIEUTENANT IN CHARGE OF RESTRUCTURING THE PARTY, LI HUAN HAS BECOME A FIGURE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE. HE IS LIKELY TO BE A KEY FIGURE IN THE POST-CCK ERA SINCE IN BUILDING A PARTY PERSONALLY LOYAL TO CCK, IT IS REASONABLE TO ASSUME THE NETWORK CREATED IS ALSO LOYAL TO LI HUAN.

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